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ABSTRACT

A total of 219 instructors of writing at the elementary, secondary, and--primarily--the college levels responded to a questionnaire survey designed to obtain information concerning their professional preparation and research priorities. The findings revealed that a large percentage of instructors did not feel they were well trained for their work. In identifying the difficulties they thought their students had in writing, the respondents cited the inability to develop ideas as their chief concern, followed closely by the inability to organize ideas. The findings confirmed the profession's interest in new teaching techniques and the recent increased attention to students as human beings. The respondents tended to avoid the use of programed instruction, television, and other audiovisual techniques in favor of discussion and conferences. They were also developing an increased interest in the use of peer tutors. The instructors' research priorities included research on the efficacy of different instructional techniques with a focus on the ways in which humans process language and on the ways in which human interaction (through writing) assists growth in writing ability. (FL)

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Needed Research in the Teaching of Writing

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NEEDED RESEARCH IN THE TEACHING OF WRITING

PART I

INTRODUCTION

In 1963, Richard Braddock, Richard Lloyd-Jones, and Lowell Schoer wrote in Research in Written Composition, the influential study published by the National Council of Teachers of English, that "Composition research . . . is not highly developed." Indeed, they asserted, the field is similar to chemical research "as it emerged from the period of alchemy . . . laced with dreams, prejudices, and makeshift operations" (p.5).

The same generalization could probably have been applied to the state of research on written composition through most of the sixties. But toward the end of the sixties increasingly important research on composition began to appear, heralded in particular by the work of Kellogg Hunt and John Mellon on sentence combining and by the investigations of Janet Emig into writers' composing processes. In the seventies, interest in research on composition grew substantially; as the publication of Research in the Teaching of English (RTE) went from semi-annual to quarterly, the number of articles on composition continued to grow. A quick look at the tables of contents in RTE for the past couple of years indicates that something like half of the articles judged publishable by RTE's Editorial Board have dealt, in one way or another, with writing.

As the number of publications dealing with research on composition has grown, so has the variety of topics studied and research techniques used. Richard Bossone and Lynn Troyka's research exemplified studies dealing with experimental and control groups on the effects of different instructional procedures and on ways of measuring progress in writing. In addition, we still see many reports of similar studies, as exemplified by essays on the effectiveness of sentence-combining as a teaching technique and on the usefulness of in-class essays as indications of progress in writing ability. But we also see reports of work on freshly defined problems with different techniques. Investigators have looked at the attitudes and dispositions of writers toward writing, in research on writing apprehension. Some scholars, most notably Walter Loban, have followed the language development of selected students over extended periods of time, and have reported their work in longitudinal studies. Janet Emig and, most recently, Sondra Perl have conducted intensive studies of the composing processes of selected individual student writers and have reported on their work in case studies. Both Emig and Perl draw upon direct observation of writers at work as well as on what these writers tell the investigators about their experiences with writing and their practices when writing. Donald Graves, in his work on the composing processes of younger children, uses the same kinds of data. Toward the end of the seventies, Linda Flower and John Hayes introduced protocol analysis, a procedure in which the subject describes aloud, as fully as possible, the steps he or she is taking while composing, and the investigator makes an intensive study of patterns of

activity revealed in the written transcript of that account. Other investigators have asked professional writers to report as fully as possible on the processes they follow in composing. Perhaps most recently, several investigators, in particular Mina Shaughnessy, have begun to report work in error analysis: systematic examination of the "errors" in the writing of students to determine the patterns and, if possible, the sources of errors made by students in composing, which in turn identify the precise points at which the student is having difficulty in his or her progress toward control of written English idiom.

In this rich and stimulating body of work, which probably no one looking ahead in 1970 could easily have forseen, investigators are largely pursuing their own interests and hunches; no clear pattern of emphasis on central issues or highly provocative questions seems to be emerging. Perhaps this centrifugality is illusory; perhaps, if not illusory, it is inevitable and even desirable. The field of the teaching of writing may not yet have attained, may never attain, and may not even want to attain a condition in which a few questions loom so central that they occupy the attention of many investigators. Or perhaps the field has arrived at a central question: what <u>is</u> this process by which people invent and compose ideas into writing? We became curious. Do members of our profession know what they want most to learn about writing and the teaching of writing? Do they have a few central questions for study, or do they indeed attach roughly equal importance to a wide variety of questions? What guidance, if any, can be given to researchers equipped

and ready to advance knowledge about written composition?

It was with these interests in mind that we began the present study. We wanted to know what teachers and readers in the field of the teaching of writing think are the central questions in their field. We wanted to know what priorities they see among possible research emphases in the field. At the very least, we thought, gathering some opinions from our colleagues about priorities might enable us to glimpse where our field is going, or might be going, in the early eighties. And these opinions might give hints to doctoral students and young researchers about directions their studies might take. And, we thought, we might even be able to gain from these opinions some useful perspectives on written composition as a field of study--some sense of how research undertaken and questions asked to date, filtered through the experience of seasoned members of our profession, help to define the discipline of composition studies.

Objectives

The objectives of this study were as follows:

1. To obtain information regarding the background and professional training of instructors of writing who were cited as being very knowledgeable about the subject.

2. To report what they believed to be major writing problems of students.

3. To cite methods and materials employed in their teaching.

4. To identify research questions or problems of importance to instructors of writing.

5. To make recommendations regarding needed research in the teaching of writing.

Procedures

To obtain data needed to accomplish the above objectives, the investigators prepared a questionnaire and sent it to 466 instructors of writing throughout the United States selected at random from lists of people supplied by leaders in the English world: Robert Hogan, Executive Director of the National Council of Teachers of English; Edward Corbett, former Editor of College Composition and Communication; James Gray, Director of the Bay Area Writing Program; Kenneth Bruffee, Editor of WPA: Writing Program Administration; and Lynn Quitman Troyka, 1980 Program Chairman of the CCCC. The questionnaire was accompanied by a letter stating the nature and purpose of the study and inviting participation.

Data presented in this study are based on 219 returns (47%) representing a cross-section of instructors of writing in elementary schools, secondary schools, and colleges or universities. Where the totals cited for specific questions differ from the total returns, the difference occurs because some questions were either not answered or answered erroneously.

PART II

THE BACKGROUND AND TRAINING OF INSTRUCTORS OF WRITING

Background Information

Sex, Position, and Teaching Level

This study was concerned with 219 instructors of writing who responded to a mailed questionnaire: 118 (53.9%) male, 95 (43.4%) female, and 6 (2.7%) who did not indicate their sex. Of the respondents, the majority 123 (57.2%) were professors of English and 58 (27.4%) directors of writing, communication, or basic skills programs. Of the remainder, 3 (0.2%) were lecturers, 10 (4.6%) instructors, 2 (0.1%) curriculum coordinators, 11 (5.0%) elementary or secondary English teachers, and 12 (5.5%) did not respond. The levels at which these respondents currently teach writing are as follows: 2 (0.9%) elementary, 23 (10.5%) secondary, 13 (5.9%) community college, 168 (76.8%) senior college or university, and 13 (5.9%) did not respond. Of the college number, the following had experience teaching at other levels as well: 4 (1.8%) elementary, 26 (11.9%) elementary and secondary, and 82 (37.4%) secondary. (See Tables 1 and 1A.)

TABLE 1

LEVELS AT WHICH WRITING
IS TAUGHT

Level	Number of Instructors	Percent
Elementary	2	0.9
Secondary	23	10.5
Community College	13	5.9
Senior College or University	168	76.8
Did Not Respond	13	5.9

TABLE 1A

LEVELS AT WHICH COLLEGE INSTRUCTORS
HAVE TAUGHT WRITING

Elementary	4	1.8
Elementary and Secondary	26	11.9
Secondary	82	37.4
College Only	94	43.0
Did Not Respond	13	5.9

Teaching Experience

The range of instructors' previous experience in teaching writing varied from 2 to 39 years. The mean number of years of teaching experience was 15.6. (See Table 2.)

TABLE 2

YEARS OF EXPERIENCE
IN
TEACHING WRITING

Years	Number of Instructors	Percent
2	1	0.5
3	2	0.9
4	3	1.4
5	5	2.3
6	6	2.6
7	6	2.6
8	9	4.0
9	8	3.7
10	24	11.0
11	7	3.2
12	12	5.5
13	10	4.6
14	8	3.7
15	22	10.0
16	13	5.9
17	6	2.6
18	5	2.3
19	2	0.9
20	22	10.0
21	8	3.7
22	5	2.3
23	3	1.4
24	5	2.3
25	3	1.4
26	1	0.5
27	3	1.4
28	4	1.8
29	2	0.9
30	7	3.2
33	1	0.5
34	1	0.5
35	2	0.9
36	1	0.5
39	1	0.5
Did Not Respond	1	0.5
Total	219	100.0
MEAN	15.6	

Approximately two thirds of these instructors, 141 (64.4%), indicated that their primary function was the teaching of writing.

Professional Training

The majority of these instructors, 181 (82.6%), had an undergraduate major in English; 20 (9.1%) had an undergraduate minor in English; 9 (4.1%) had neither an English major nor minor. (See Table 3.)

TABLE 3

UNDERGRADUATE TRAINING IN ENGLISH

Grouped According to Major and Minor

	Yes		No		Did Not Respond	
Major	181	(82.6%)	30	(13.7%)	8	(3.7%)
Minor	20	(9.1%)	62	(28.3%)	137	(62.6%)
Neither Major nor Minor	9	(4.1%)	28	(12.8%)	182	(83.1%)

Of the 219 respondents, 140 (63.9%) indicated that they had a Ph.D.; 14 (6.4%) had an Ed.D.; 59 (26.9%) an M.A. or M.S. degree; 5 (2.3%) a B.A. or B.S.; and 1 (0.5%) did not respond. (See Table 4.)

TABLE 4

PROFESSIONAL TRAINING OF INSTRUCTORS

Degrees	Number of Respondents	Percent
Ph.D.	140	63.9
Ed.D.	14	6.4
M.A./M.S.	59	26.9
B.A./B.S.	5	2.3
Did Not Respond	1	0.5
Total	219	100.0

In response to the question, "Do you feel you received the proper training to teach writing?" of the 218 instructors who answered the question, 42 (19.2%) checked "yes," 71 (32.4%) checked "somewhat," and 105 (47.9%) checked "no."

Of those who indicated "yes" and "somewhat" to the question about receiving proper training, the majority of respondents gave "experience" or having taken a course or two from some well known professor in the field as the major reason for believing they were prepared to teach writing.

PART III

OPINIONS REGARDING STUDENTS' PROBLEMS IN WRITING

In order to discover what major problems instructors believed students have in writing, a list of possible student problems was prepared. Instructors were asked to check those they felt were major problems and to add any additional ones not listed. Respondents indicated students' major writing problems in the following order of frequency:

Inability to develop ideas

Inability to organize

Inability to write effective sentences

Poor diction/vocabulary

Insufficient ideas

Inadequate knowledge of punctuation and mechanics

Inability to avoid gross errors in grammar

Inability to spell

Other

No understanding of the process of writing

Lack of confidence

Lack of audience awareness

Lack of skill as a result of poorly prepared teachers

Fear of writing

Inability to perceive writing as a worthwhile skill

(See Table 5.)

TABLE 5

OPINIONS REGARDING STUDENTS' PROBLEMS IN WRITING

Possible Student Problem	Major Problem #	Major Problem %	Not Major Problem #	Not Major Problem %
Insufficient ideas	77	35.2	142	64.8
Inability to develop ideas	188	85.8	31	14.2
Inability to organize	151	68.9	68	31.1
Inability to write effective sentences	126	57.5	93	42.5
Inability to avoid gross errors in grammar	46	21.0	173	79.0
Inadequate knowledge of punctuation and mechanics	62	28.3	157	71.7
Inability to spell	42	19.2	177	80.8
Poor diction/vocabulary	84	38.4	135	61.6
Other	82	37.4	137	62.6

PART IV

TEACHING METHODS AND MATERIALS EMPLOYED

In response to the question, "What teaching methods do you use?" the majority indicated they primarily employed the discussion method. The least used method was television.

In response to a request to specify other methods employed, methods cited, in order of frequency, were:

Small peer workshop writing groups

Peer class discussion of student papers

Use of sample writings

Peer reading groups

Practice in writing

Guided group revision

Work with tutors

Demonstration of writing process

(See Table 6.)

TABLE 6

METHODS AND MATERIALS EMPLOYED

Methods	Very Often		Often		Sometimes		Seldom		Never		Did Not Respond	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
Lecture	15	6.8	32	14.6	82	37.4	66	30.1	14	6.4	10	4.7
Discussion	106	48.4	76	34.7	31	14.2	1	0.5	1	0.5	4	1.7
Programmed Instruction	5	2.3	7	3.2	28	12.8	51	23.3	97	44.3	31	14.1
Television	1	0.5	2	0.9	15	6.8	44	20.1	121	55.3	36	16.4
Team Teaching	6	2.7	9	4.1	53	24.2	54	24.7	66	30.1	31	14.2
Audio-visual	6	2.7	26	11.9	73	33.3	57	26.0	32	14.6	25	11.5
Conference	1	0.5	75	34.2	91	41.6	42	19.2	4	1.8	6	2.7
Peer Tutoring	42	19.2	47	21.5	72	32.9	24	11.0	19	8.7	15	6.7
Other	1	0.5	54	24.7	21	9.6	3	1.4	-	-	140	63.8

PART V

FACTORS INFLUENCING WRITING

One of the major objectives of the present study was to determine which research questions are considered important to instructors of writing. In order to accomplish this, 41 questions were prepared relating to the areas of Background Factors Influencing Writing, Developmental Factors Influencing Writing, Instructional Factors Influencing Writing, and Administrative Factors Influencing Writing. The instructors were asked to indicate their estimate of the degree of importance for each question on a four point scale. In addition, at the end of each factor area, if more than one question had been circled as "very important," the respondent was asked to indicate which item, in his or her judgment, was the most important.

Opinions Regarding Background Factors Influencing Writing

In response to questions regarding background factors influencing writing, the instructors were asked to indicate which questions were "very important," "important," "somewhat important," or "not important."

Two thirds of the respondents found two questions in this category to be very important or important: "What in a student's cultural background most directly influences his/her learning to write?" and "Do certain cognitive styles facilitate learning to write more than other styles?" Of these two questions, the latter was identified as the more important question.

Most frequently cited under "Other" was "What effect does a student's reading and/or skill have on his/her ability to write?" (See Table 7.)

TABLE 7

OPINIONS REGARDING BACKGROUND FACTORS INFLUENCING WRITING

	Degree of Importance									
	Very Important		Important		Somewhat Important		Not Important		Did Not Respond	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
1. Do certain cognitive styles facilitate learning to write more than other styles?	63	28.8	80	36.5	42	19.2	13	5.9	21	9.6
2. To what degree do parents influence their children's ability to write?	46	21.0	63	28.8	78	35.6	26	11.9	6	2.7
3. What effect does exposure to television and similar media have on students' attitudes toward writing and ability to write?	50	22.8	62	28.3	82	37.4	17	7.8	8	3.7
4. What in a student's cultural background most directly influences his/her learning to write?	81	37.0	63	28.8	38	17.4	7	3.2	30	13.6
5. Other	55	25.1	13	5.9	1	0.5	1	0.5	149	68.0

Opinions Regarding Most Important Question

Question	#	%
1	26	11.9
2	12	5.5
3	8	3.7
4	21	9.6
5 (Other)	22	10.0
Did Not Respond	130	59.3

Opinions Regarding Developmental Factors Influencing Writing

In response to questions regarding developmental factors influencing writing, more than 85% of the respondents cited, in order of frequency, the following questions as "very important" or "important":

1. What processes do students follow in analyzing, evaluating, and revising their own writing?

2. Do frequency and regularity of writing in courses outside English appreciably accelerate the pace of students' growth in writing, as well as assist retention of that growth?

3. When writers encounter difficulties about what to say and how to say it, how do they overcome these difficulties?

In addition, more than three quarters of the respondents cited, in order of frequency, the following questions as "very important" or "important":

4. What factors encourage the underprepared student to feel anxious about writing and how can such anxiety be relieved?

5. What audiences, if any, do students primarily have in mind when they write themes?

6. What can analysis of the patterns and sources of "errors" in students' writing tell us about ways to guide students in improving their writing?

Of these six questions, the first question was cited as the most important.

No one question was cited frequently under "Other." (See Table 8.)

TABLE 8

OPINIONS REGARDING DEVELOPMENTAL FACTORS INFLUENCING WRITING

	Degree of Importance									
	Very Important		Important		Somewhat Important		Not Important		Did Not Respond	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
1. What benefits, if any, can accrue from having students engage in extensive personal writing before they engage in objective writing?	75	34.2	73	33.3	43	19.6	22	10.1	6	2.8
2. When writers encounter difficulties about what to say and how to say it, how do they overcome these difficulties?	101	46.1	82	37.4	16	7.3	4	1.9	16	7.3
3. What audiences, if any, do students primarily have in mind when they write themes?	92	42.0	78	35.6	35	16.0	3	1.4	11	5.0
4. What factors encourage the underprepared student to feel anxious about writing and how can such anxiety be relieved?	86	39.3	85	38.8	33	15.1	5	2.3	10	4.5
5. What are the most common and important characteristics of the underprepared writer?	54	24.7	92	42.0	46	21.0	11	5.0	16	7.3
6. What factors motivate below average, average, and above average students to write?	76	34.7	74	33.8	48	21.9	7	3.2	14	6.4
7. What can analysis of the patterns and sources of "errors" in students' writing tell us about ways to guide students in improving their writing?	79	36.1	87	39.7	37	16.9	4	1.8	12	5.5

TABLE 8 (Continued)

OPINIONS REGARDING DEVELOPMENTAL FACTORS INFLUENCING WRITING

	Degree of Importance									
	Very Important		Important		Somewhat Important		Not Important		Did Not Respond	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
8. What processes do students follow in analyzing, evaluating, and revising their own writing?	113	51.6	80	36.5	13	5.9	3	1.4	10	4.6
9. What changes, if any, occur in the cognitive processes of adolescents that affect their writing skills?	14	6.4	65	29.7	87	39.7	44	20.1	9	4.1
10. Do frequency and regularity of writing in courses outside English appreciably accelerate the pace of students' growth in writing, as well as assist retention of that growth?	9	4.2	98	44.7	90	41.1	18	8.2	4	1.8
11. Which school and life activities engaged in by students after completion of formal writing instruction are most likely to help students retain what they have learned?	15	6.8	32	14.6	85	38.8	68	31.1	19	8.7
12. At what levels of maturation should students be asked to attempt various types of writing?	14	6.4	60	27.4	92	42.0	41	18.7	12	5.5
13. Other	203	92.6	10	4.6	5	2.3	1	0.5	-	-

TABLE 8 (Continued)

Opinions Regarding Most Important Question

Question	#	%
1	9	4.1
2	26	11.9
3	14	6.4
4	7	3.2
5	5	2.3
6	20	9.1
7	13	5.9
8	30	13.7
9	11	5.0
10	19	8.7
11	2	0.9
12	12	5.5
13 (Other)	3	1.4
Did Not Respond	48	21.9

Opinions Regarding Instructional Factors Influencing Writing

In response to the questions regarding instructional factors influencing writing, more than 80% of the respondents cited, in order of frequency, the following questions as "very important" or "important":

1. Which pre-writing activities are most useful in assisting students to write effective papers?

2. What relationship is there between gains in reading ability and gains in writing ability?

3. Which instructional procedures contribute most directly to improving a students's writing efforts at different grade levels?

4. What approaches to the writing of comments on students' papers are most likely to encourage students to improve their writing?

5. What is the connection, if any, between different means of evaluating writing ability and ways of improving that ability?

Of these questions, the third question was cited as the most important.

Most frequently cited under "Other" was "How is instruction in writing related to instruction in note taking, critical reading, oral presentation?" (See Table 9.)

TABLE 9

OPINIONS REGARDING INSTRUCTIONAL FACTORS INFLUENCING WRITING

	Degree of Importance									
	Very Important		Important		Somewhat Important		Not Important		Did Not Respond	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
1. Do students learn to write better when writing is taught in conjunction with types of literature or when it is only taught in conjunction with expository prose?	32	14.6	84	38.4	72	32.9	20	9.1	11	5.0
2. Which instructional procedures contribute most directly to improving a student's writing efforts at different grade levels?	105	47.9	71	32.4	22	10.0	4	1.8	17	7.9
3. Which are most effective --writing assignments with nonspecific topics, with specific topics, or a combination of the two?	32	14.6	100	45.7	60	27.4	11	5.0	16	7.3
4. To what extent should the cognitive style of the writing teacher be similar to the cognitive style of the students?	17	7.8	49	22.4	82	37.4	55	25.1	16	7.3
5. Which approaches to analyzing the organization and style of discourse hold greatest promise in helping students produce effective themes?	52	23.7	82	37.4	62	28.3	10	4.6	13	6.0
6. What are the benefits and limitations of teaching students specific organizational plans in their writing?	41	18.7	96	43.8	59	26.9	9	4.1	14	6.5

TABLE 9 (Continued)

OPINIONS REGARDING INSTRUCTIONAL FACTORS INFLUENCING WRITING

	Degree of Importance									
	Very Important		Important		Somewhat Important		Not Important		Did Not Respond	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
7. Which pre-writing activities are most useful in assisting students to write effective papers?	80	36.5	101	46.1	21	9.6	4	1.8	13	6.0
8. Are certain instructional activities more effective than others in developing students' ability to write more varied sentences?	38	17.4	112	51.1	46	21.0	9	4.1	14	6.4
9. What is the effect of formal instruction in grammar on students' ability to strengthen their writing?	22	10.0	54	24.7	70	32.0	58	26.5	15	6.8
10. What impact, if any, does teaching the history and dialects of the language have upon students' understanding of how to use language?	10	4.6	45	20.5	99	45.2	52	23.7	13	6.0
11. What are the effects of instructing students to imitate, closely or in broad outline, models of professional prose?	20	9.1	65	29.7	90	41.1	33	15.1	11	5.0
12. Which teaching procedures are most effective in teaching writing to ESL students?	48	21.9	90	41.1	51	23.3	4	1.8	26	11.9
13. What relationship is there between gains in reading ability and gains in writing ability?	94	42.9	85	38.8	21	9.6	6	2.7	13	6.0

TABLE 9 (Continued)

OPINIONS REGARDING INSTRUCTIONAL FACTORS INFLUENCING WRITING

	Degree of Importance									
	Very Important		Important		Somewhat Important		Not Important		Did Not Respond	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
14. What proportion of in-class and out-of-class writing is most effective in helping students improve their writing?	14	6.4	82	37.4	86	39.2	24	11.0	13	6.0
15. What is the relationship between frequency in writing assignments and writing improvement?	59	26.9	96	43.8	47	21.5	6	2.7	11	5.1
16. Do students learn to improve their writing more effectively when instruction is exclusively from a teacher or when instruction is from a teacher and peers?	66	30.1	92	42.0	40	18.3	7	3.2	14	6.4
17. What techniques for conducting student conferences encourage students most readily to improve their writing?	59	26.9	101	46.1	42	19.2	5	2.3	12	5.5
18. What approaches to the writing of comments on students' papers are most likely to encourage students to improve their writing?	74	33.8	98	44.7	31	14.2	3	1.4	13	5.9
19. What is the connection, if any, between different means of evaluating writing ability and ways of improving that ability?	82	37.4	88	40.2	29	13.2	5	2.3	15	6.9
20. Other	8	3.7	3	1.4	1	0.5	-	-	207	94.4

TABLE 9 (Continued)

Opinions Regarding Most Important Question

Question	#	%
1	4	1.8
2	23	10.5
3	1	0.5
4	-	-
5	13	5.9
6	9	4.1
7	21	9.6
8	1	0.5
9	1	0.5
10	-	-
11	1	0.5
12	1	0.5
13	19	8.6
14	1	0.5
15	8	3.7
16	9	4.1
17	10	4.5
18	7	3.2
19	19	8.6
20 (Other)	3	1.4
Did Not Respond	68	31.0

Opinions Regarding Administrative Factors Influencing Writing

In response to questions regarding administrative factors influencing writing, 67% of the respondents cited, in order of frequency, the following questions as "very important" or "important":

1. What kinds of tests are most effective in assessing students' writing abilities: objective, direct writing performance, or a combination of the two?

2. What is the preferable class size for teaching writing to students classified as below average, average, and above average?

3. What is the comparative value of having writing courses taught exclusively by English instructors and having them taught by other faculty as well?

Of these three questions, the third question was cited as the most important.

No one question was cited frequently under "Other." (See Table 10.)

TABLE 10

OPINIONS REGARDING ADMINISTRATIVE FACTORS INFLUENCING WRITING

	Degree of Importance									
	Very Important		Important		Somewhat Important		Not Important		Did Not Respond	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
1. What is the comparative value of having writing courses taught exclusively by English instructors and having them taught by other faculty as well?	49	22.4	98	44.7	46	21.0	12	5.5	14	6.4
2. What is the comparative value of teaching writing in 50-minute time periods and teaching it in longer blocks of time (2 hours, 3 hours, etc.)?	28	12.8	71	32.4	76	34.7	29	13.2	15	6.9
3. What is the influence of support services (e.g. audio-visual equipment, paraprofessionals) on the effectiveness of teaching writing?	14	6.4	57	26.1	98	44.7	39	17.8	11	5.0
4. What is the preferable class size for teaching writing to students classified as below average, average, and above average?	82	37.4	70	32.0	46	21.0	8	3.7	13	5.9
5. What kinds of tests are most effective in assessing students' writing abilities: objective, direct writing performance, or a combination of the two?	68	31.1	86	39.3	33	15.1	11	5.0	21	9.5
6. Under what conditions and to what extend does the chief administrator of a writing program affect the teaching and results of that program?	51	23.2	83	37.9	62	28.3	8	3.7	15	6.9

TABLE 10 (Continued)

OPINIONS REGARDING ADMINISTRATIVE FACTORS INFLUENCING WRITING

	Degree of Importance								Did Not Respond	
	Very Important		Important		Somewhat Important		Not Important			
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
7. Other	14	6.4	4	1.8	1	0.5	-	-	200	91.3

Opinions Regarding Most Important Question

Question	#	%
1	25	11.4
2	7	3.2
3	4	1.8
4	22	10.0
5	19	8.7
6	16	7.3
7 (Other)	8	3.7
Did Not Respond	118	53.9

Opinions Regarding the Most Important Factor

In response to the question regarding the four factors--Background, Developmental, Instructional, and Administrative--considered to be the most important research factor for instructors of writing, over sixty percent of the instructors indicated "Instructional" and nearly fifty percent indicated "Developmental" as the most important.

Of these two factors, the former was judged to be the most important. (See Table 11.)

TABLE 11

OPINIONS REGARDING THE MOST IMPORTANT FACTOR

	Degree of Importance									
	Very Important		Important		Somewhat Important		Not Important		Did Not Respond	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
Background	44	20.1	88	40.2	64	29.2	7	3.2	16	7.3
Developmental	109	49.7	86	39.3	9	4.1	3	1.4	12	5.5
Instructional	141	64.5	59	26.9	6	2.7	2	0.9	11	5.0
Administrative	22	10.0	72	32.9	80	36.5	24	11.0	21	9.6
Other	7	3.2	1	0.5	-	-	-	-	211	96.3

PART VI

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

This study about professional preparation and research priorities, compiled from a carefully drawn cross-section of the profession of writing instructors confirms what other studies and informal samplings of opinion have indicated: a large percentage of instructors of writing do not believe they were well trained for their work. Half of our respondents indicated flatly that they had not received "proper training"; only a fifth thought that they had. These figures obviously support the increasing efforts now being undertaken around the country to install programs (or at least courses and sequences of courses) for the preparation of instructors of writing. The figures support, too, the need for activities, such as the Bay Area Writing Project, to reach those who entered the profession before training was available. It would appear that such activities need to be increased and extended if we are to reach writing instructors who entered the profession without adequate preparation.

When we turn from our respondents' professional training to the difficulties they think their students have in writing, we encounter some mild surprises. At a time when popular interpretations of the "basics" are causing administrators to insist that students be trained

in the control of English grammar, in punctuation, and in spelling, our respondents tell us that these are not the difficulties that trouble them most in their students' work. Instead, they report that students' inability to "develop ideas," i.e., to support and to explore the implications of those ideas, is their chief concern, followed closely by students' inability to organize ideas. These findings suggest that programs to prepare teachers of writing need to focus particularly on how to help teachers deal with the development and organization of ideas. They suggest, too, that rhetoricians and theorists of the composing process need to find ways of describing how writers organize and develop thought and find better ways of helping students master these processes.

Our findings confirm the profession's interest in new teaching techniques and its recently increased attention to our students as human beings. If programmed instruction, television, and other audio-visual techniques--once thought to be the answers to the problem of influencing large numbers of students with vivid teaching--were ever prominent, they are not so now in the methodology of our respondents, who rely a good deal on discussion and conferences but are developing increased interest in the use of peers as tutors in writing--in helping students teach students. Concerns for the impact of television and media on students' writing seem less prominent now than concern for students' cultural background (who the students are) and for their cognitive styles--a subject that has hardly begun to be seriously explored except among a few of the intellectual leaders of our profession. Concerns for the writer as a thinking, struggling, composing human being are reflected in the importance our

respondents attach to the processes students follow in judging and revising their own writing, in meeting and surmounting difficulties in composing, and in overcoming writing anxiety. Our respondents also show an interest in the patterns and sources of students' errors: why and how they occur. And the respondents reflect interest in the totality of instruction in writing being experienced by the student--the experiences that the student is having throughout his or her studies. We have become, these responses tell us, concerned about the writer as person--about how he or she can learn from others like him, about who he is and why he is what he is, about how he works, and how he learns. More than product-centered, we are process-centered; but it would be more accurate still to say that we are student-centered: we look upon composing and revising processes as part of the activity of the writer as a human being.

Confronted with the chance to tell their priorities in research on instruction, our respondents, naturally, urged research on the efficacy of different instructional techniques. But the instructional research that interests the respondents is once again not that which will support a return to the "basics" of language, narrowly interpreted: studies of the effect of instruction in grammar, of dialects and the history of the language, of models for writing. Their attention focuses, rather, on the ways in which human beings process language (e.g. the relationships between gains in reading ability and in writing ability), the ways in which they come to find ideas (e.g. useful pre-writing activities), and the ways in which interaction between human beings--through written comments,

through conferences, through peer tutoring--assists growth in writing ability. Given the current interest in ways of evaluating students' writing, our respondents are interested in the effect of evaluation upon ability in writing. As might be expected of people working at a time when the processes by which a human being learns to write are under discussion, they are curious about whether frequency in writing activities helps improvement in writing. They wish to know how to help students develop the ability to write varied sentences. And, as befits a group that is troubled by students' inability to organize and develop ideas, they wish to know more about the effects on students' writing of teaching ways to analyze the structure and style of discourse and of teaching specific approaches to the organization of ideas. Their interest in students' cognitive styles, however, has not yet prompted many to inquire whether the teacher's cognitive style should match that of the students. And the question that used to be significant to many teachers of English, whether writing is best taught in a course focused upon literature, obviously appears less significant today to our respondents.

From these responses on priorities in research on instruction, there emerges, we think, confirmation of the tendencies revealed in other portions of our instrument: an interest in the processes by which language is produced and understood; a concern for the processes by which concepts are formed and ideas arranged; and a concern for ways in which human beings, together, can contribute to each other's learning of that language.

These tendencies were confirmed in our respondents' priorities among the several broad kinds of questions we asked. We should be directing our attention as a profession, they suggested, to the forces behind students' development as writers and to the processes of that development, as well as to ways in which by understanding those processes we can encourage and support them in instruction. Administrative arrangements (class size, for example, even testing procedures), though considered more important than other administrative matters we asked about, seemed on the whole less important for us to focus on in our research, although--as is appropriate for a group that voiced concern over the places where writing is taught in the curriculum and over how frequently students write--our respondents recorded an interest in whether writing should be taught exclusively by instructors in English.

Do the results of our survey suggest implications for action on the part of the profession? We believe they do.

First, the profession should continue, indeed intensify, its efforts to assure that faculty in English--in schools and colleges--are given well-planned and extensive preparation for the teaching of writing. This preparation should include (1) study of the recent research on ways in which human beings process language (as they read, as they listen, as they speak, as they write), research on the development of ability to write, and research on the cognitive operations that affect one's ability to conceptualize and to organize ideas, as well as (2) study of the structure of language and the ways in which discourse works. This preparation should also include some attention to the ways in which writing,

and the growth of students' ability in writing, can be tested.

Second, the profession should intensify its efforts to reach those members who, with no preparation to speak of for their work, are now teaching increased numbers of students in writing, and to provide for them, in some way, the same kinds of preparation being offered to those newly entering the profession. This in-service work should include the study of research on language processing, on the development of students' writing abilities, and on cognitive operations, as mentioned above.

Third, researchers (those already teaching, doctoral candidates, specialists in educational research) should continue to give attention, through case studies and observation as well as experimental procedures, to locating connections between reading and writing, to the ways in which human beings develop their power to process language, to the cognitive operations that affect writers' ability to conceptualize ideas, and indeed to all of the problems that are related to ways in which writers learn to compose. These kinds of studies are every bit as important as, and perhaps more important now than, studies of the structure of discourse and the operations of language or studies of instructional techniques--interesting as those topics still are.

Fourth, among their investigations of instructional patterns and techniques, researchers should give more attention--if reliable methods of investigation can be found--to ways in which interaction between teacher and student and between students, maybe even between writers and readers outside the classroom, influences learning. Researchers should try to help us, if they can, discover models for instruction in writing that

rely on structures other than the familiar one in which a group of students meets with and takes direction from a single instructor (or even a team of instructors). Such studies might contribute much to our understanding of the kinds of arrangements within which language learning, in particular learning to write, takes place most readily.

Fifth, since the fruits of research, particularly that on language development and on cognitive operations, can affect the practice of teachers only if those practitioners know about it, the profession should find means (not necessarily another journal, but perhaps through current journals or through a well-publicized monograph series) to make widely available the insights into students' development, and into the problems and anxieties they encounter during that development, that researchers achieve. All of us need to enlarge our understanding of our students as developing human beings using language--clearly a major concern of the respondents to our survey.

Although those who hear the calls for a return to the basics, for accountability, and for standardized testing may, for a moment, be in doubt about it, we are increasingly a student-centered profession, a group of humanists who recognize writing as an activity performed by people who have undergone a complex process of development and who are capable of further development if we can only understand how to foster that development. Our research, and the preparation we give to those who enter our profession, should increasingly express that central humanism.